

Audio 1 - E's homelessness

I mean the first challenge he had was that he was homeless and the circumstances of him becoming homeless were of a fairly rapid onset. My understanding was that Edmond had been living in one of the local boarding homes, just on Dowling avenue and had lived there for quite a few years actually and lived a kind of diminished life within the boarding home; that is he took his medication, he slept a great deal, he gained a lot of weight, that was his history. And then one day he kind of decided that he had had enough of that and just you know, stopped taking his medication, moved out of the boarding house and took a room in this rooming house at the corner, which is now Edmond's Place and moved in.

Of course it was rooming house and a pretty ratty one at that. There weren't any kind of supports, it wasn't supportive housing, there wasn't really supportive housing available for many people. So the first problem, the most pressing one for his survival was that he was evicted from the boarding house and that's when I met him, standing essentially on Queen St. with a cheque in his hand, having a conversation with himself about whether he was going to fight for his right to live there, that's pay his rent again this month or accept what the operator was telling him which was: your done, your gone, no process. That's how all those places ran.

I've sorta gone on the record of saying having gone walking... found him, that's when I met him, in that moment and walked in with him to try and negotiate with the landlord and see if I could keep this person from becoming homeless because he had clearly lived in this place and had the money to pay rent. The owner was not very welcoming and as a result, Edmond sort of decided that he didn't want to live in place where he wasn't welcome and that made him instantly homeless.

So as far as his survival, he joined many hundreds, hundreds and hundreds of people who were at that time living rough on the streets of Toronto. Some of them living in very public ways like several hundred people sleeping on Nathan Phillips Square, the shelters were full, there were encampments of homeless people all across the city, under the bridges, down here in the railway lands. So Edmond simply joined this army of people who were homeless and that in and of itself was a life threatening situation.